

MINUTES

MONTANA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES 59th LEGISLATURE - REGULAR SESSION

COMMITTEE ON FEDERAL RELATIONS, ENERGY, AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Call to Order: By **CHAIRMAN ALAN OLSON**, on April 4, 2005 at 3:25 P.M., in Room 455 Capitol.

ROLL CALL

Members Present:

Rep. Alan Olson, Chairman (R)
Rep. Dave Gallik, Vice Chairman (D)
Rep. Dennis Himmelberger, Vice Chairman (R)
Rep. Robyn Driscoll (D)
Rep. George G. Groesbeck (D)
Rep. Robin Hamilton (D)
Rep. Hal Jacobson (D)
Rep. Harry Klock (R)
Rep. Mark E. Noennig (R)
Rep. Diane Rice (R)
Rep. Wayne Stahl (R)
Rep. Karl Waitschies (R)

Members Excused: Rep. John Parker (D)

Members Absent: Rep. Brady Wiseman (D)

Staff Present: Todd Everts, Legislative Branch
Cynthia Peterson, Committee Secretary

Please Note. These are summary minutes. Testimony and discussion are paraphrased and condensed.

Committee Business Summary:

Hearing & Date Posted: HJ 40, 3/31/2005; SB 428, 3/31/2005
Executive Action: SB 428

HEARING ON SB 428

Opening Statement by Sponsor:

SEN. COREY STAPLETON (R), SD 27, opened the hearing on **SB 428**, providing for a 211 - disaster, emergency, safety, health, human service referral phone service. **SEN. STAPLETON** informed the Committee that 50 percent of the states have enacted similar legislation.

Proponents' Testimony:

Susi McIntyre, Voices of Hope, Great Falls, submitted a fact sheet explaining the proposed 2-1-1 service. **Ms. McIntyre** thought that 2-1-1 services will connect people with the services they need much faster and would be more cost-effective. **Ms. McIntyre** also explained that 9-1-1 estimates that between eight and ten percent of the calls they receive are inappropriate, and **Ms. McIntyre** believed 2-1-1 would help to reduce that percentage, especially in the event of a natural disaster.
[EXHIBIT \(feh71a01\)](#)

Gayle Shirley, Public Information Officer, Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS), testified that SB 428 will begin the process of establishing a statewide 2-1-1 telephone system. The new system will connect Montanans quickly and easily to disaster, emergency, safety, health and human service resources. **Ms. Shirley** explained that SB 428 is the result of a grassroots effort across the state that saw the need for a one-stop referral system for human service programs. In addition, the 2-1-1 service will allow for the sharing of accurate and credible information with the public. **Ms. Shirley** clarified that SB 428 will also allow DPHHS to anticipate demand for services and give them the ability to mobilize resources to meet those needs. **Ms. Shirley** pointed out that DPHHS will oversee the 2-1-1 study, design, implementation and support, but will not operate the 2-1-1 system.

Walter Pyatt, United Way, Kalispell, testified that 2-1-1 is an easy-to-remember number that would provide access to most agencies and services. On behalf of Montana consumers, **Mr. Pyatt** urged the Committee to support 2-1-1 services.

Dan Lieberg, Deputy Administrator for Disaster and Emergency Services Division, supported SB 428 and stated a similar system was used during the fires of 2000.

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Paul Spengler, Lewis and Clark County Disaster and Emergency Services Coordinator and representing the Montana Disaster and Emergency Services Association, supported SB 428. **Mr. Spengler** testified that during disasters and emergencies, people need timely and accurate information. **Mr. Spengler** believed a person who is fearful and anxious should be able to access information about the situation.

Gordon Morris, Montana Association of Counties (MACo), also appeared on behalf Missoula County Commissioner Jean Curtiss. Ms. Curtiss is a member of the advisory council appointed by Governor Schweitzer. **Mr. Morris** liked the fact that the 2-1-1 service would be available to everyone.

Sherry Stevens Wulf, Kalispell, manages a call center servicing four counties in Northwest Montana. **Ms. Wulf** believed SB 428 would connect people with the answers they need. **Ms. Wulf** explained that Kalispell's United Way currently donates \$35,000 to the project. **Ms. Wulf** spoke about the need to take the burden off the 9-1-1 system.

Jim Kimble, Montana Association of Chiefs of Police, testified as a proponent of SB 428.

Angela Garlington, Voices of Hope, submitted a letter from Jim Morton, Executive Director, Missoula Human Resource Council.
[EXHIBIT \(feh71a02\)](#)

Gary Owen, President of United Way in Cascade County, voiced his support for SB 428 and believed 2-1-1 services would improve the quality of life for Montana citizens.

Tim McCauley, Executive Director of United Way of Lewis and Clark County and Chairman of the 2-1-1 Advisory Committee, suggested 2-1-1 would be an asset to mental health services, including suicide prevention and domestic violence. **Mr. McCauley** identified three types of systems: centralized, decentralized, and a hybrid system. A national study has determined the decentralized system is not very cost effective.

Deborah Pate, Area 3 Director, Conrad, works in seven rural counties. **Ms. Pate** thought 2-1-1 services would provide a vital resource for these rural counties.

Don Jones, Montana Advocacy Program (MAP), submitted written testimony from Anita Roessmann, and testified as a proponent for

SB 428. Mr. Jones believed SB 428 would strengthen Montana's safety net for people with disabilities.

[EXHIBIT](#)(feh71a03)

Opponents' Testimony: None.

Informational Testimony: None.

Questions from Committee Members and Responses:

REP. GEORGE GROESBECK, HD 74, BUTTE, asked if the 2-1-1 system would operate with existing employees and the existing level of funding. SEN. STAPLETON agreed and stated the intent was that it would function with existing employees and within existing amounts of money.

REP. WAYNE STAHL, HD 35, SACO, thought the number of board members was unusually large.

{Tape: 1; Side: A; Approx. Time Counter: 24.2 - 30.5; Comments: Questions from the Committee regarding SB 428.}

{Tape: 1; Side: B}

Ms. McIntyre responded they were attempting to ensure space was available to add stakeholders if it became necessary.

REP. HAL JACOBSON, HD 82, HELENA, asked about how often the Montana Community 2-1-1 Coalition (Coalition) would meet. Ms. McIntyre responded that for the first year, the Coalition would meet every other month and then would meet quarterly. REP. JACOBSON wondered if the four existing call centers were considered approved. Ms. McIntyre explained there had not yet been an official approval process since the Coalition does not have that power.

REP. KARL WAITSCHIES, HD 36, PEERLESS, was curious how the four call centers were currently funded. Ms. McIntyre explained each call center is funded differently and operates under different amounts of money. REP. WAITCHIES asked if the State would be required to provide funding. Ms. McIntyre envisioned the centers operating under private/public partnerships. Ms. McIntyre charged the Coalition with the task of determining a funding plan and envisioned a state-wide system would have a start up cost of \$500,000 and operational costs of approximately \$750,000.

REP. MARK NOENNIG, HD 46, BILLINGS, asked about potential conflicts between 2-1-1 services and 9-1-1 services. Ms.

McIntyre thought conflicts could be avoided by good coordination between the two services and an extensive marketing campaign.

REP. JACOBSON wondered how many people are being served by the 2-1-1 service. **Ms. McIntyre** explained five counties are served by Kalispell; three counties are served by Missoula; three or four counties are served by Bozeman; and Great Falls mainly serves Cascade County.

Closing by Sponsor:

SEN. STAPLETON thanked the Committee and closed the hearing on SB 428.

HEARING ON HJ 40

Opening Statement by Sponsor:

REP. CHRISTOPHER HARRIS (D), HD 66, opened the hearing on **HJ 40**, which would urge support for the U.S. constitutional amendment on balanced budget. **REP. HARRIS** was concerned about the ramifications of having an \$8 trillion national debt. **REP. HARRIS** believed there was no willpower in Congress to curb spending, and Congress is spending without having the necessary revenue. **REP. HARRIS** suggested the Social Security program is in trouble because the government has been borrowing from the fund. **REP. HARRIS** did not feel Social Security was the only Federal program from which the Congress had borrowed. Therefore, since there is no motivation for Congress to be diligent to balance the budget, **REP. HARRIS** believed HJ 40 is necessary. **REP. HARRIS** stated bankruptcy is not an option for the United States of America.

Proponents' Testimony: None.

Opponents' Testimony: None.

Informational Testimony: None.

Questions from Committee Members and Responses:

REP. NOENNIG asked about the language on Page 2, Line 3. **REP. HARRIS** explained SJR 2 is a proposed constitutional amendment calling for a balanced budget.

REP. DIANE RICE, HD 71, HARRISON, asked **REP. HARRIS** to elaborate on what happened in 1990 with the Graham Rudman Act. **REP. HARRIS**

believed the Act was modified and the teeth of the Act had been dulled. **REP. HARRIS** did not believe the Act was a deficit-controlling mechanism anymore.

REP. WAITCHIES noted **REP. HARRIS** had said there is no willpower in Congress to curb spending, but wondered if it would be hypocritical for Montana to request them to do what Montana has been unable to do. **REP. HARRIS** responded that at the end of the Legislature, Montana will have to balance the books because it is constitutionally mandated to do so. Congress, however, is not mandated to balance the books of the Federal Government.

REP. HARRIS offered to provide copies of U.S. Senate Joint Resolution 2 to the Committee. **REP. NOENNIG** believed that the Legislature could encourage Congress to do the right thing, but in the end, Congress would do what it wants. **REP. HARRIS** thought a tougher Constitutional Amendment would be necessary since Congress does not exercise fiscal discipline.

{Tape: 1; Side: B; Approx. Time Counter: 12.8 - 28.3; Comments: Hearing on HJ 40 (continues on Tape 2, Side A).}

{Tape: 2; Side: A}

REP. DENNIS HIMMELBERGER, HD 47, BILLINGS, was concerned about the Federal funds Montana receives. **REP. HARRIS** explained that for every dollar Montana sends to Washington, D.C., Montana receives back \$1.60. **REP. HARRIS** suggested that situation would not last anyway.

Closing by Sponsor:

REP. HARRIS closed the hearing by saying it is time to tell Congress the Federal Government has to balance the budget.

EXECUTIVE ACTION ON SB 428

Motion: **REP. GROESBECK** moved SB 428.

Discussion:

REP. RICE commented that 9-1-1 is still being implemented in her area and wondered if the two services could be piggybacked to avoid duplication of infrastructure. **REP. JACOBSON** explained part of the reason for the legislation is to avoid duplication. **REP. NOENNIG** agreed part of the reason for the legislation was to unclog the calls to 9-1-1, and emphasized 9-1-1 is meant to deal

with emergencies, and 2-1-1 is a provider reference.

REP. JACOBSON thought it would take awhile to educate the public on the purpose of 2-1-1.

REP. WAITCHIES wanted to know how 2-1-1 would be funded. **REP. JACOBSON** explained the Federal Government is discussing legislation that would provide some limited funding for the 2-1-1 service.

REP. STAHL did not support the bill since the 9-1-1 system and cellular 9-1-1 system are not running at the capacity and technological levels that they should be. **REP. STAHL** thought it was too early to try to implement another system.

REP. GROESBECK was encouraged since the program would be a private/public partnership and would not be funded solely by government. **REP. GROESBECK** stated he would support the legislation.

REP. DAVE GALLIK, HD 79, HELENA, explained the legislation is intended to operate within DPHHS's current budget, and if people think DPHHS's budget is bloated, this program would provide more "bang for the buck."

CHAIRMAN OLSON viewed the bill as a study resolution to see if the program would work. **CHAIRMAN OLSON** wondered if SB 428 would actually implement the 2-1-1 system. **REP. JACOBSON** explained the group is already meeting and the members are paying their own expenses. The group would like DPHHS to set the criteria for the call centers.

Vote: Motion that SB 428 BE CONCURRED IN carried 9-5 by roll call vote with **REP. HIMMELBERGER, REP. RICE, REP. STAHL, and REP. WAITSCHIES** voting no, and **REP. KLOCK** voting no by proxy. **REP. JACOBSON** will carry the bill on the floor of the House.

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ADJOURNMENT

Adjournment: 4:40 P.M.

REP. ALAN OLSON, Chairman

CYNTHIA PETERSON, Secretary

AO/cp

Additional Exhibits:

EXHIBIT ([feh71aad0.PDF](#))